

## Note

### *Steinchisma hians* (Elliott) Nash, the correct name for *Fasciculochloa sparshottiorum* B.K.Simon & C.M.Weiller

When the grass *Fasciculochloa sparshottiorum* was described (Simon & Wheeler, 1995), isotypes were distributed to many Australian and international herbaria listed under the protologue description. The specimen sent to the herbarium of the Missouri Botanical Gardens (MO) was recently examined by its Curator of Grasses, Dr Gerrit Davidse, who provided me with his observations of the specimen.

“The genus and species you described as *Fasciculochloa sparshottiorum* immediately seemed familiar to me and upon a closer look under the dissecting microscope, seemed exactly like the widespread American *Steinchisma hians* (*Panicum hians*). I notice that in your paper you did not compare your material to this species, but they must surely be the same. They also grow in the same kind of habitat, judging by the photo in your paper. I would not be surprised that this may a recent introduction. Is that a possibility?”

I was able to confirm Dr Davidse’s conclusions regarding this taxon from a comparison with three specimens of this species from the New World in BRI (*S.M. Tracy s.n* from Starkville, Missouri; *R.L. Crockett 6871* from Jefferson County, Texas (ex US); T.B. Ryves 69 from Freer, Texas).

An isotype was also sent on loan in 1998 to the Instituto de Botanica Darwinion, San Isidro, Argentina for examination by Dr Fernando Zuloaga and colleagues, as part of an ongoing cladistic study of the grass tribe Paniceae (Zuloaga, Morrone and Giussani 1998). This author and colleagues had undertaken a cladistic study of the genus *Steinchisma* in early 1997, published in 1998 (Zuloaga, Morrone, Vega & Giussani 1998). Although they suspected that *Fasciculochloa* was similar, or identical, to *Steinchisma*

(Zuloaga, pers. com.) at the time they had not seen the type of *Fasciculochloa sparshottiorum*, and thus did not formally place *Fasciculochloa* in synonymy under *Steinchisma*. The most recent cladistic analysis of the Paniceae (Zuloaga, Morrone and Giussani in press), indicates clearly that *Fasciculochloa* and *Steinchisma* are the same taxon.

*Steinchisma hians* is widespread in the New World, occurring in the southern and eastern United States (Hitchcock & Chase 1951, as *Panicum hians*) and in Mexico, Central America, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina (Fig 6 in Zuloaga, Morrone, Vega & Giussani 1998). It generally grows in wet habitats. There is a good illustration of it in Fig. 8 of the 1998 paper of Zuloaga et al.

*Steinchisma hians* is the type of *Steinchisma*, published in 1830 by Rafinesque. Taxonomically the genus has had rather a chequered history of being placed in *Panicum*, as a section or subgenus of *Panicum* (Zuloaga 1987) or as a genus in its own right (Brown 1977, Clayton & Renvoize 1986, Renvoize 1998, Zuloaga, Morrone, Vega & Giussani 1998). Currently it is recognised as a distinct genus on cladistic evidence (Zuloaga, Morrone, Vega & Giussani 1998). The synapomorphies by which members of the genus are recognised include the leaf blade characters of the number of chlorenchyma cells (5-7) between the vascular bundles and the presence of chloroplasts in the parenchyma sheath. Distinguishing morphological characters are “the expanded lower palea and the presence of verrucose papillae all over the upper anthoecium” although the latter “do not show as apomorphic characters in the cladistic analysis because these characters are also present in a related genus, *Plagiantha*.” (Zuloaga, pers. com.).

The date and point of entry of this New World grass species to Australia is of interest, in view of the fact that it has not been reported before on this continent. There is a possibility that it could date back to the days of World War 2, as there was a large contingent of American troops encamped near the area of collection at that time. However, the fact that it has not become more widespread since then may point to a more recent arrival in Australia. In support of this hypothesis is the circumstance of its presence in South Africa. It has been reported as occurring in that country in the last decade (Gibbs Russell et al 1990, as *Panicum hians*), but it is not recorded in a previous account of South African grasses (Chippindall 1955).

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**Bryan K. Simon,**

**Queensland Herbarium, EPA, Brisbane Botanic Gardens Mt Coot-tha, Mt. Coot-tha Road, Toowong, Queensland 4066, Australia**